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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

##### Gul-Rice to Meet in Sofia

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told Hurriyet that in response to Secretary Rice's get well wishes, he sent a hand-written letter to her, inviting the US Secretary of State to Turkey to discuss "problems here in the region." Citing Greek papers, Sabah says Secretary Rice will visit Turkey on April 25-27 before the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Sofia to discuss Cyprus, Kosovo, and the transfer of natural gas to Europe through Turkey and Greece. Gul said that the 50-year-long Turkey-US ties were "strong and deeply-rooted," and that the two countries shared the same vision and values. "We share with the United States values such as democracy, transparency, freedom, and expansion of basic rights. Together with the United States, we want such values to prevail around the world," Gul maintained. He said there were no problems in ties with the US. "Turkey is located in the most critical geography in the world, so more meetings between us and the US are required. Different opinions on both sides will not change the course of our relationship. Americans, too, have clashing views in their government," Gul said.

##### Thousands of Iraqis Flee Country

Yeni Safak reports some 60,000 Iraqis have fled the country for other countries including Jordan, Turkey and Syria. Iraqi officials said 10,000 homes had been destroyed across Iraq due to attacks by the US-led coalition forces. More than 100,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed since 2003, according to Iraqi Refugees Ministry.

##### Iraq International Fair to be Held in Turkey

Hurriyet, Radikal: The Iraq International Fair will be held in the southeastern Turkish city of Gaziantep from June 7-11. State Minister Kursad Tuzmen said some 1,000

companies from Europe, Africa, America and Asia would attend the fair, making Turkey the main center of trade with Iraq. "Turkey's exports to Iraq were USD 2.7 billion in 2005. We want to get the biggest share in Iraq's rebuilding," Tuzmen said.

**Bahceli Warns Southeast Turkey against Provocations**  
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Zaman: Devlet Bahceli, the leader of the extreme-right National Action Party (MHP) warned his party members against "ethnic provocations" at a party congress in the southern city of Adana. Bahceli also called on the mainly Kurdish people in the southeast to defend unity. "I ask our brothers in southeast Turkey -- does the US love you more than us? We must protect Turkey's unity. We will not give away even an acre of Turkey," Bahceli stressed.

#### Commentary on the Iran Nuclear Stand-off

Washington-based Yasemin Congar writing in mainstream Milliyet reports that according to a US military official who served in Iraq, if a decision is taken to launch a military operation, the US certainly "hopes to see Turkey facilitate it," but that given the way Turkey voted in the lead up to the Iraq war, "no plans will be shaped based on the hope that Turkey will offer assistance."

In a column entitled, "Is Washington Bluffing?" Islamist-oriented Zaman, Washington-based Ali Aslan says that the relationship in the US between the military and civilian authorities is "interesting to watch." Aslan points out that the Bush administration made its own Iraq decisions

ANKARA 00002099 002 OF 002

"ignoring the worries expressed by military authorities" and that a "similar situation is now seen on the Iran issue." He concludes that the military "does not want the use of force against Iran at this stage since its focus is Iraq where troubles still continue. The military does not want to see the same mistakes repeated."

TV News  
(NTV, 8.00 a.m.)

#### Domestic News

- Seven members of Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP have been detained in Nusaybin in southeast Turkey. The mayor of Diyarbakir, the main city in the restive southeast, said only dialogue can resolve the problems of his region.

- Turkey will issue new passports in 2007 to prevent forgery.

#### International News

- Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki said Iran will give the Palestinian Authority USD 50 million.

- The Sunday Times electronic edition claimed Iran was training 40,000 "suicide commandos" to strike American and British targets around the world if Iranian nuclear sites are attacked.

- US-led coalition forces killed seven Afghan civilians in fighting with militants in eastern Afghanistan.

- Israeli and American sources rejected reports that Israel would swap the imprisoned al-Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti with Jonathan Pollard, former US Defense Department official, who is in prison in the US for spying for Israel.

#### Economy News

- The World Bank Turkey director Andrew Vorking said Turkey needed a new reform package to boost employment.

- Finance Minister Kemal Unakitan said nuclear plants were the only alternative for pulling down energy costs in Turkey. The head of Turkish nuclear agency TAEK said the location to build Turkey's first nuclear plant had not been fixed yet.

- Greek businessmen want to make joint investments with Turkey in Central Asia.

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